

American Association of Physics Teachers

Enhancing the understanding and appreciation of physics through teaching

Alabama Section of AAPT

Dear High School Counselor,

As a group of Physics Educators, we are concerned with a trend toward students "opting out" of physics in the high school curriculum. This has a long-term effect on the future of these students, particularly those who later select to major in scientific fields. Students who take physics in college have a significant advantage if they have been exposed to the subject in high school. This includes most students in pre-health programs as well as physics, engineering, and other science majors.

There are also important implications for other students. Educational research done by the American Institute of Physics indicates that courses in high school physics teach both critical thinking and a range of broadly applicable problem solving skills. Regardless of their future educational choices, these are skills that help insure academic success.

When considering admission, colleges want to see that students have taken a challenging curriculum. While academically more challenging, a grade of "B" in physics is generally perceived as more desirable than an "A" in a less challenging, general studies course. Vikki Otero, an admissions officer with the University of Colorado, states this quite clearly: "College admission is never just about the GPA. A transcript with a physics course listed is better than one without it."

Because of your close work with high school students, anything you can do to encourage choices that help to ensure their long-term success is greatly appreciated. Your time and concern for these students is invaluable.

Sincerely,

Ali Yazdi

Chair, Department of Physics, Jefferson State Community College, President Alabama Section of American Association of Physics Teachers

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "ali yazdi".

Dan O'Halloran

Physics Specialist, President-Elect Alabama Section of AAPT

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Stan Jones

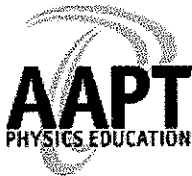
Physics Professor, University of Alabama, Section Representative Alabama Section of AAPT

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Duane Pontius

Physics Professor, Birmingham Southern College, Past-President Alabama Section of American Association Physics Teachers (AAPT)

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